

**Richard Sneed, Principal Chief
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians**

Biography

The Principal Chief is the top executive in the Tribal Government, responsible for endorsing and enforcing the laws of the Tribe, managing day-to-day operations, and ensuring the overall welfare of the 15,000-plus enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. He acts as the spokesperson, leader, and liaison for the Tribe with other governments. Richard G. Sneed was elected as Vice Chief of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in September 2015 and then ascended to the office of Principal Chief in May 2017.

Richard Sneed was born on December 20, 1967 to Richard and Patricia Gregory Sneed of the Wolfetown Community. He has been married to his wife, Trina, for 28 years and they have five children and two grandchildren. Chief Sneed proudly served in the United States Marine Corps, where he was selected as the platoon Honor Graduate at the end of Basic Training and upon completion of service, received an Honorable Discharge from the Marine Corps. Trina Sneed also served in the United States Marine Corps.

Chief Sneed graduated from Universal Technical College in Phoenix, Arizona and, in 1998, he founded Cornerstone Automotive Inc. His company provided fleet maintenance for the local hospital EMS and transportation services as well as fleet maintenance for the local county government and city municipal fleet. After four years, he sold the company to pursue his dream of teaching.

In 2003, Chief Sneed received his North Carolina teaching license in industrial arts from SCC and UNCA. He worked as the vocational instructor at Cherokee High School from 2003 until 2015. In 2013, he experienced a milestone in his teaching career when the National Indian Education Association selected him as the National Classroom Teacher of the Year. This prestigious award was given to Chief Sneed as a result of his efforts to incorporate a holistic approach to education within a vocational program, which included financial literacy training, life skills training, and entrepreneurship. As a member of the Cherokee High School staff, he was selected to serve on the School Improvement Team, tasked with developing a strategic plan to improve graduation rates and test scores. In 2009, he began his tenure as the chairman of the school board for New Kituwah Academy, our Cherokee Language Immersion school, where he served until early 2012.

Throughout his teaching career, Chief Sneed served as the senior pastor at Cherokee's Christ Fellowship Church, in a bi-vocational role, from 2002 until his election to Tribal Government in 2015. In his role as senior pastor, he placed a strong emphasis on expository teaching and youth ministry.

“It is my humble honor to serve our people as the Principal Chief of our Tribe. I believe that Tribal leaders should be servants of the people, and I strive to fulfill that belief daily. I am convinced that we succeed as a people when we strive for a community that honors every person within our Tribe. And while it is imperative that we do the right things for our people, it is equally important that we do them in a right way. A way that honors our God, our people, and those who have gone before us.”